

Negotiating a Better Future

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Can training Zambian girls in negotiation skills positively impact their health and education outcomes?

School data for Zambia shows a **dramatic decline in female enrollment** beginning in the early teen years. While this drop is normally attributed to the commencement of school fees in the eighth grade, a closer look reveals that the enrollment decline starts prior to the fee increase, and is **three times higher for girls than boys**, according to the Zambian Ministry of Education.

When young girls struggle to stay in school, they may not develop

the skills necessary to support themselves, and in relying on male partners for resources, they oftentimes have to offer sex in return. Such relationships are prevalent across sub-Saharan Africa, leaving young girls **highly vulnerable to HIV infection and unwanted pregnancy**, evidenced by the **two-to-one ratio of HIV rates among young women versus their male counterparts**.

What if there was a way to train Zambian girls to adopt the communication skills needed to

negotiate health and education decisions with power figures in their lives?

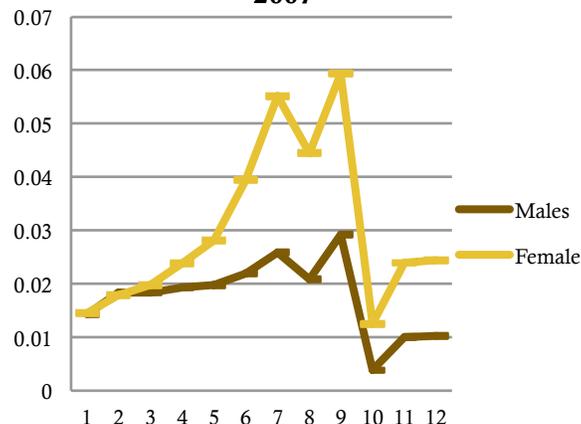
Through a **randomized controlled trial (RCT)**, the gold standard for program evaluations, our study analyzes **whether negotiation skills that allow a girl to reshape her own understanding of a conflict and her communications with others, without changing outside factors, can ultimately result in more favorable allocations of resources.**

WHY ZAMBIAN GIRLS?

- Zambian women endure **high maternal mortality** (470/100,000), **high HIV rates** (57% of adults living with HIV are women), and **high dropout rates**.*(see chart at left).
- **Challenging cultural context for young women and children**, in which speaking out to adults is unacceptable, limiting the ability for girls to serve as agents of change.
- **Early teen years are ideal time for an intervention**: 15.9% of women reported first act of sexual intercourse as age 15; 60.4%, reported age 18.*
- Zambian government **seeking to reduce or eliminate school fees in the future**, but this is costly and requires substantial infrastructure adjustments. More cost effective solutions would allow near-term improvements without massive investment.

*Source: Zambia DHS 2007

Dropout Rates by Grade, Zambia 2007*





Information is Power, But not if you are Powerless...

In 2009, the World Health Organization reported that: *“Women may face barriers [to HIV/AIDS education, testing and treatment] due to their lack of access to and control over resources, child-care responsibilities, restricted mobility and limited decision-making power.”* They go on to name negotiation skills for women and expanded efforts to keep girls in school as critical tools for reducing HIV rates among women in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Testing the impact of negotiation training (see curriculum outline below) with Zambian girls tells us how important skills related to communication and interaction can be in taking advantage of information that is already provided to girls in current school curricula on HIV/AIDS, health, and education.

1. Me

- Understand own interests
- Know other option

2. You

- Find the good
- Choose the approach
- Discover their interests

3. Together

- Identify shared interests
- Recognize roadblocks
- Look for trades

4. Build

- Brainstorm creative solutions
 - Complete building checklist
 - Decide what really matters
- *Walk away as needed*

Take 5

Study Timeline

- **Jul-Oct 2011:** Pilot to finalize the study curriculum and intervention design
- **Jan-Feb 2012:** Qualitative interview with pilot cohorts to determine potential size and sources of impact. Pilot of full study, including baseline survey, intervention, and follow-up survey, at single school.
- **March-April 2012:** Plan for study launch
- **May-Aug 2012: Full Intervention with 2,400 girls across 20 schools**
 - Obtain parental consent and perform baseline survey with all grade 8 girls (and families) at a single school
 - Via public lottery, randomly assign girls into Social Capital, Info Only, or Info + Negotiation groups. Two-week intervention period.
 - While intervention taking place, begin baseline survey of next school and repeat
- **Sept-Dec 2012:** Track short-term outcome measures and perform in-school follow-ups
- **May-Aug 2013:** Perform one-year follow-up survey
- **August 2015:** Long-term outcomes.

**Funding currently sought for Full Intervention*

Innovative Design for Girls' Empowerment

- We **uniquely and specifically test components of youth empowerment programs:** social capital, information, and communication skills (each tested separately)
- We **experiment in a realistic school setting**, learning directly from intended beneficiaries (young Zambian women), in an extremely cost effective and replicable manner
- We **test the value of shifting the balance of power toward youth** in creating optimal inter-generational allocations and promoting youth health and education.

For more information, please contact Kate Otto, Research Manager (kotto@hbs.edu)

Measuring Success

Innovative three-arm design isolates impact of interest, while multiple outcome measures allow us to observe both the size of the effect and its mechanism

Contrary to typical program evaluations that measure an intervention “wholesale”- making it difficult to know which program component caused the impact - this study isolates the impact of teaching information versus teaching negotiation by layering information and negotiation on top of a “social capital” program that includes time with other girls in a safe space.

The study, a randomized controlled trial, is implemented in the following three arms:

1. **Social capital:** girls meet after school to play games; receive lunch, notebook, and pen
2. **Information only:** girls meet after school to learn information on HIV and importance of schooling and to play games, also receive lunch, notebook, and pen
3. **Negotiation plus information:** girls receive above program plus negotiation training

Outcome measures will measure both the size and source of impact, capturing transformations in the girl’s capabilities, her interactions with others, and the outcomes from those interactions:

- **Survey data:** Self-perception, outcomes of arguments and discussion, reported locus of control, intra-household allocations, and sexual risk exposure. Impact on the family measured through parent and sibling surveys to see if gains in participant well-being come at the expense of other family members.
- **Real outcomes (administrative data):** Rates of pregnancy, school attendance and advancement, and potentially STI/HIV rates
- **Behavioral measures:** Take-up of an additional opportunity that requires child-parent negotiation, altered willingness to pay for schooling by parents, responses to negotiation scenario or partner game.



Policy Implications

A December 2000 report by the Zambian Ministry of Education concluded that **HIV/AIDS campaigns should include negotiation and communication skills** in addition to information. Moreover, the government, NGOs, and other stakeholders are continually seeking low-cost ways to reduce maternal mortality, increase secondary schooling (increasing national human capital), and curb HIV transmission.

If successful, our curriculum could be scaled up countrywide in partnership with the Ministry of Education to increase schooling attainment and lower HIV infections at a relatively low cost. Moreover, the findings have the potential to influence the approach to improving social outcomes for girls, even if the intervention is not implemented wholesale in other areas.

For example, policymakers may want to consider the benefits of packaging informational campaigns on avoiding sex with older men or delaying first intercourse with the communication skills required to achieve these outcomes.

The findings will be disseminated locally through the Ministry of Education and in-country partners, and globally through the IPA and Harvard networks, as well as publication in academic and policy journals.



Strong Foundations, Sustainable Results

Strong Institutional Support

- **IPA-Zambia** is a local research organization led by Nava Ashraf and Grace Msichili, who have conducted RCTs in Zambia since 2004 in partnership with local government and field partners.
- PIs **Kathleen McGinn** and **Nava Ashraf** bring strong support from Harvard University, including expertise in, respectively, **Negotiation & Gender** and **Global Health Management**.

Delivers Meaningful Results

- Individual impact on girls as well as macro impacts on **human capital, health measures, and educational outcomes**.

Builds on Strong Relationships

- Curriculum built from two years of focus groups, pre-tests, and pilots.
- Prior IPA-Zambia projects already confirm low bargaining power of women in Zambia (*Ashraf, Field, Lee 2010*).
- Research team has been working collaboratively with the **Zambian Government** since 2006.
- Formal partnerships on this project with **Ministry of Health** and **Ministry of Education**, via office of the **HIV/AIDS coordinator**, are being developed.



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Project partners:



Project supporters:



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